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DERRYFIELD

(Now Manchester, N. H.)

IN THE

REVOLUTION

By GEORGE WALDO BROWNE

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Derryfield in the Revolution.

If difference in religious beliefs had divided the early inhabitants of Derryfield and made them anything but peaceful neighbors, there was no lack of harmony shown upon the question of their civil liberty. Scotch Presbyterian and English Puritan had alike suffered at the hands of the aggressive Royalists, and each had been driven from his native land to seek in the wilderness of New England that long-sought privilege of living according to the rigid doctrines of his theological teacher. Something of the irony of fate may have been felt by them in unexpectedly meeting in the new world the stern, combative elements of a rival denomination, but future generations were to prove that it was the divine working of that same mysterious Providence which had guided them to this shore. The happy combination of the rugged traits possessed by them has produced a race that has been a most important factor in the making of the history of the foremost country of the twentieth century.

However bitter personal controversies may have risen they did not blind them to the menace of common danger, and each from his standpoint watched with a zealous eye the steady encroachments of his universal rights by the oppressive sovereign of a government that had never known what opposition really meant. Derryfield, without any disunion of sentiment, was among the first towns in the province to vote to help carry on the cost of preparing to meet the enemy hand to hand should the worst come.

At a special meeting held January 16, 1775, the town voted unanimously to raise "their equal propoicion of money that shall

hereafter arise towards paying the cost of the General Court as any other town in the Province." It is difficult to see what more Derryfield could do. The 15th of the following May it was voted to send a man to the convention to be held the 17th. At the same meeting it was voted that Captain Alexander Mac-Murphy, Lieutenant James McCalley, Ensign Samuel Moore, Eleazer Stevens and John Perham be a "commetty in behalf of us." This committee was the original of the Committees of Safety that soon followed.

When the crisis came, suddenly and prematurely, the men of Derryfield quickly proved that they were as faithful and prompt to act as they had been to promise, and the echoes of the guns at Lexington had not ceased their reverberations up and down the valleys of the Granite hills before they were on the march to cope with the invaders. Stark left the mill log on its carriage and seizing his musket and powder horn, without stopping to put on his coat, started for the scene of war. Robert McKnight left his ax sticking in the body of the tree he was felling and barely stopping to bid his loved ones good bye hastened to the defence of his country. Another, whose identity is not plain in the mixed accounts of the exciting times, unyoked his oxen in the road and followed on the heels of Stark. Others at work in their clearings, about their homes or wherever their duties had called them, immediately gave up all else and joined in this grand rally to help drive from the land the foes of liberty.

The latest official record at the time credited Derryfield with thirty-six able bodied men, and of that number only two remained behind with the old men and decrepit ones to look after affairs at home. The history of the Granite State is a proud one, but she has not a town which can match this record. It is a pity the names of these patriots have not been preserved, except as they are to be found on the tax list for that year, and which is copied from the records, vol. I, page 284, as follows:

TAX-PAYERS IN DERRYFIELD FOR 1775-6.

Conl. John Goffe,	John Yand, Esqr.
Maj. John Moors,	Ensin. Samuel Moors,

	James McKnight,	Capt.	Nathaniel Merton,
	William Nutt,		timothy Mertion,
	John Griffen,		John Griffen, Junr.
	Benjamin Baker,		Benjamin Baker, Junr.
	Johnathan Merrell,		Jesse Baker,
	Joseph Gorge,		Abrham Merrell,
	Abrham Merrell, Junr.,		David Merrell,
	Jospeh Griffen,		Ezekiel Stavens,
	Joseph farmer,		Isaac farmer,
Widow	Sarah Russ,		Robert Clark,
	John Reay,	Conl.	John Stark,
	David farmer,	Levt.	James McCalley,
Ensin.	Samuel Stark,		Robert McNight,
	David McNight,		Daniel Blodget,
	Joshua Blodget,		Litchfield,
	Litchfield,		John Parham,
Capt.	William Parham,		John Parham,
	Ebenezer Coster,		Charles Eamerson,
	Charles Eamerson, Junr.		Gorge Eamerson,
	John Harvey.		William Parham, Junr.
	Micheal Mc Clintock,		James Pairces,
Capt.	Alexander mc Murphey,		Benjmen Crombie,
	Moses Crombie,	Ensin.	Samuel Boyd,
Ensin.	Nathaniel Boyd,	Widow	Margret Boyd,
	John Dickey,		William Gemble,
	Robert Cuningham,		David Starret,
	John Hall,		Daniel Hall,
Sergt.	Ebnezer Stivns,		Hugh thompson,
	Benjmen Pilsbury,		thomas Numan,
	Josep Masten,		James Lagon,
	Bakerstown,		Londonderry,
	Robrt mc Clouer.		Alexander Irwing,
	Londonderry,		Joseph George Select
	Ceaser Griffen,		Samuel Stark Men.

Recorded this 24th day of December, 1775.

JOHN HALL, Town Clerk.

An analysis of this list shows that of the 64 names five were those of non-residents, and two of women, leaving 57 tax-payers, many of whom must have been old men and those who were unfitted by disability to bear arms.

Of the thirty four men who rushed to the front at the first alarm twenty-three participated in the battle of Bunker Hill under Stark in Captain John Moore's company which was made up principally of men from Derryfield, Bedford and Londonderry.

It is one of the singular records of war that though in the thickest of the fight not one was killed. As a witness of the stern work they did on that memorable day ninety-six of the enemy were found dead or disabled on the battlefield in front of their position.

During the cessation of hostilities which succeeded this sanguinary battle about half of these men returned to their homes, but it proved even then not enough of the town officers were present to transact business. At a special meeting on August 11, two selectmen, David Starrett and Samuel Stark, were chosen "in room of those gone to the war." At the same meeting it was voted not to send a delegate to the congress at Exeter. The report of the selectmen to the Committee on Safety made in September of that year shows that there were still sixteen men in the army. These, says Potter, were doubtless at Winter's Hill. There were twenty firelocks in town at the time, but no ammunition. The report adds, "There is 20 more men in Said Town fit to Bare Arms."

June 1, 1776, every man in Derryfield able to perform military duty signed the declaration of fidelity to the cause of the colonists demanded by the Committee of Safety, while at this time the following men were in the army: Colonel John Stark, Captain John Moore, Captain James McCalley, Captain Alexander MacMurphy, Captain Nathaniel Martin, Nathaniel Baker, Timothy Dow, Benjamin Baker, Samuel Harvey and Ebenezer Costa. Colonel Stark was with his regiment on the expedition to Canada, and following the retreat of this disastrous campaign, General Gates placed him at the head of a brigade.

Soon after he was ordered to join Washington in Philadelphia with his regiment. There he was assigned to Sullivan's division and in the battles of Trenton and Princeton, as they had at Bunker Hill, it was the men of the Merrimack valley who bore the brunt of battle and won more than their share of the results, and foremost among them were the sons of Derryfield. General Sullivan in a letter to Hon. Mesech Weare, Chairman of the Committee on Safety, said: "Believe me, sir, the Yankees took Trenton before the other troops knew anything of the matter!" The Derryfield soldiers belonged to the company of Capt. Eben Frye of Pembroke, but were assigned to the command of Sergt. Ephraim Stevens of this town, under whose lead a mere handful of sixteen men captured sixty Hessians and marched them triumphantly to headquarters.

In the necessity of obtaining more men for the colonial service immediately after the battle of Princeton Stark returned to New Hampshire to recruit another regiment from a field already so closely culled that only he could have succeeded. But in the midst of his heroic efforts his enemies were at work against him and the trouble followed which caused him to leave the army and retire to his home at Amoskeag, until at the urgent request of his friends and fellow patriots he consented to lead our troops in the rescue at Bennington. These scenes have been so fully described in the life sketch of Stark and the battle of Bennington given elsewhere in these collections that it is not necessary to enter into the details here. The biography of John Stark and the history of Derryfield for those years are very closely interwoven.

While her soldiers were battling at the front so manfully for the cause of independence, those at home were having scarcely less serious efforts toward help carrying on the war. Relative to the matter of bounty for soldiers the records show the following warrant and action in regard to the same:

"These are to notify and warn all the inhabitants of the town of Derryfield lawfully qualified to vote in Town Meetings to assemble and meet at the meeting house in said Derryfield upon

Monday the second day of April next at ten of the clock before noon, then and there to act on the following particulars, viz.:

"1 ly to choose a Moderator for the regulating said meet.

"2 ly to consult and agree upon some effectual method to raise the proportion of men required by authority to be raised by said town, for carrying on the present war in which we are engaged, &c , &c.

March the 31th day, 1777.

"Benjamin Crombie,

"Ebenezer Stevens,

"Selectmen."

Derryfield, April the 2d day, 1777.

Then meet agreeable to the above notification and voted Col. John Stark Moderator of said Meeting. then voted to pay men that engages into the Conteneentel Services for sd Town as a Bounty fifty dollars per man. Afterwards voted eighty dollars per man in lue of fifty.

"Voted the present Selectmen collect the above money of the free holders in said Town or borrow the above money if demanded before it can be collected.

"Recorded this 3d day of April, 1777.

"David Starrett,

"Town Clerk."

At a special meeting June 2, 1777, a movement "failed to settle and give credit to those persons that has done duty and advanced some money towards carrying on this unnatural war since beginning of Hostilities to this, so that the whole costs of said ware may be squarely proportioned according to polls and Estates." At this meeting it was voted Col. John Stark, Captain William Perham, John Harvey, David Starret and James Pierce a committee to regulate and state the prices of things not mentioned in the Regulation Act. Agreeable to vote we find that a tax was levied upon the male polls amounting to 1321lbs. 13s. 4d. "to discharge the bounty of five men who enlisted in the Continental Army for three years." Again it was voted at a special meeting "to care for the family of Robert McKnight," who was a three years' soldier. May 26, 1778, it was voted "to have the one-half of fifty two Pounds of Powder from

David Starrett for a Town Stock of Powder which the said Starrett purchased on his own cost in Exeter at nine shillings per pound." In the stress of obtaining recruits in the closing years of the war we find it voted, May 22, 1780, that "the Militia Officers together with the Selectmen shall provide or git by hier sutch Soldiers as shall frum time to time be called for as our cota towards carrying on the war. as cheap and in the best manner they can and the charge of said hier. if they cannot be got by Enlistment to be paid by a rate that shall be levied on the polls and estates of the inhabitants of the Town."

"Feb. 13, 1781, voted that the expense of the war shall be defrayed by a town tax levied on the polls and Estates.

"Voted that a committee consisting of Samuel Moore, John Hall, Joseph Sanders to hire such men to serve in the Continental army for 3 years as called for and secure them for such pay as they may engage as soldiers.

"Voted all who engage in the public Survice be cleared from paing aney poll tax for the space of one year after there return.

March 22 1781.

"Voted on 3d article in the warrant to allow six hard dollars per Month, for three months that they sent a Soldier into the service the year past or the value thereof in paper money.

"Voted on 5th article in the warrant not to have any Scouting this year."

The value of money for this year is illustrated in the allowance of \$1000. to John Hall for "extraordinary services as constable." In the warrant for a special meeting called for July 12, 1781, the second article runs:

In as much as there hath bin a very suden and unexpected revelution respecting the old Continantal money sence the Rates were made. and the money raised to purchas Beef for the Army doth not answare the eand desired, there fore to see what we the Town will vote to make of said money raised to purchas Beef and also to see what method the town will take to purchas said Beef for the Army, which is wanted immediately.

Voted upon this article that the three Selectmen shall divide the Town into three classes in order to provide the Beef for the

Army, and that each class shall furnish there equal proportion of said Beef and each person shall be equally assed according to Pole and estate, and that said Beef shall be delivered to the Selectmen who is head of his class.

Voted that each man that hath paid this Beef tax to Mr, Joseph Farmer Constable may have leave to take his money back again when demanded, providing this was done within 7 days.

The weight of the beef purchased for the army for this year, 1781, is recorded as 3105 pounds, and the cost of purchasing said beef 108 pounds. The amount bought for 1780 was 3720 pounds and the cost paid Jonathan Russ for buying same was 294 pounds. The rates for 1782 were as follows: Soldier rate 89lbs. 10s. 4d., which was doubled before the year ended, town rate, 491lbs. 2s. 11d., continental and state rate, 249lbs. 2s. 3d., minister rate, 16lbs. 0s. 3d., Silver rate for interest, 5lbs. 0s. 11d., New Emission rate, 92lbs. 8s. 3d., a burden of taxation the inhabitants bore with commendable fortitude. There was still a backwardness in paying the soldiers the money due them and on March 16, 1784, we find it voted to pay them "the money they have not received." December 8, 1794, it is recorded that the bounty of the Minute Men "be \$1. when enlisted, \$1. when passed muster, \$1 when they march and \$8. per month with cong. amt." Once more and for the last time the records refer to the matter, when, October 13, 1807, it was voted to raise one hundred dollars if the soldiers be called for as bounty. Voted the town give the Soldiers two Gallons of West India Rum who turned out in defense of the country." It goes without saying that through all the vicissitudes of the long and sanguinary struggle for the country's independence, whether with the men whom she sent to the brunt of battle or those who met the arduous duties at home, old Derryfield was never for a moment faithless to her trust.



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